DC
BATMAN
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The Penguin Affair
3 of 3

The Penguin Affair: III

Chapter Three: WINGED VENGEANCE

TO THINK I STUDIED BUTLERING FOR THE THRILL OF SWEEPING UP AFTER DECEASED AVIANS AND THEIR DROPPINGS...
MY ALMA MATER WOULD REPOSSESS MY GRADUATION RING IF WORD EVER ESCAPED.
BLAME THE PENGUIN, HE'S THE ONE WHO HAD THEM TRASH THE BATCAVE.
HERE IT IS, TIM— THE MECHANISM THAT CONTROLS THE BIRDS IS IMPLANTED IN THEIR SKULL'S-- SOME KIND OF WAVE MODULATOR.
IT'S A MARVEL OF MINIATURIZA-TION.
HOLY!

M. WOLFMAN & A. GRANT co-plotters · MARV WOLFMAN writer · MARK BRIGHT penciler · RANDY EMBERLIN inker · JOHN COSTANZA letters · ADRIENNE ROY colors · DAN RASPLER assoc. editor · DENNY O'NEIL editor · BOB KANE creator

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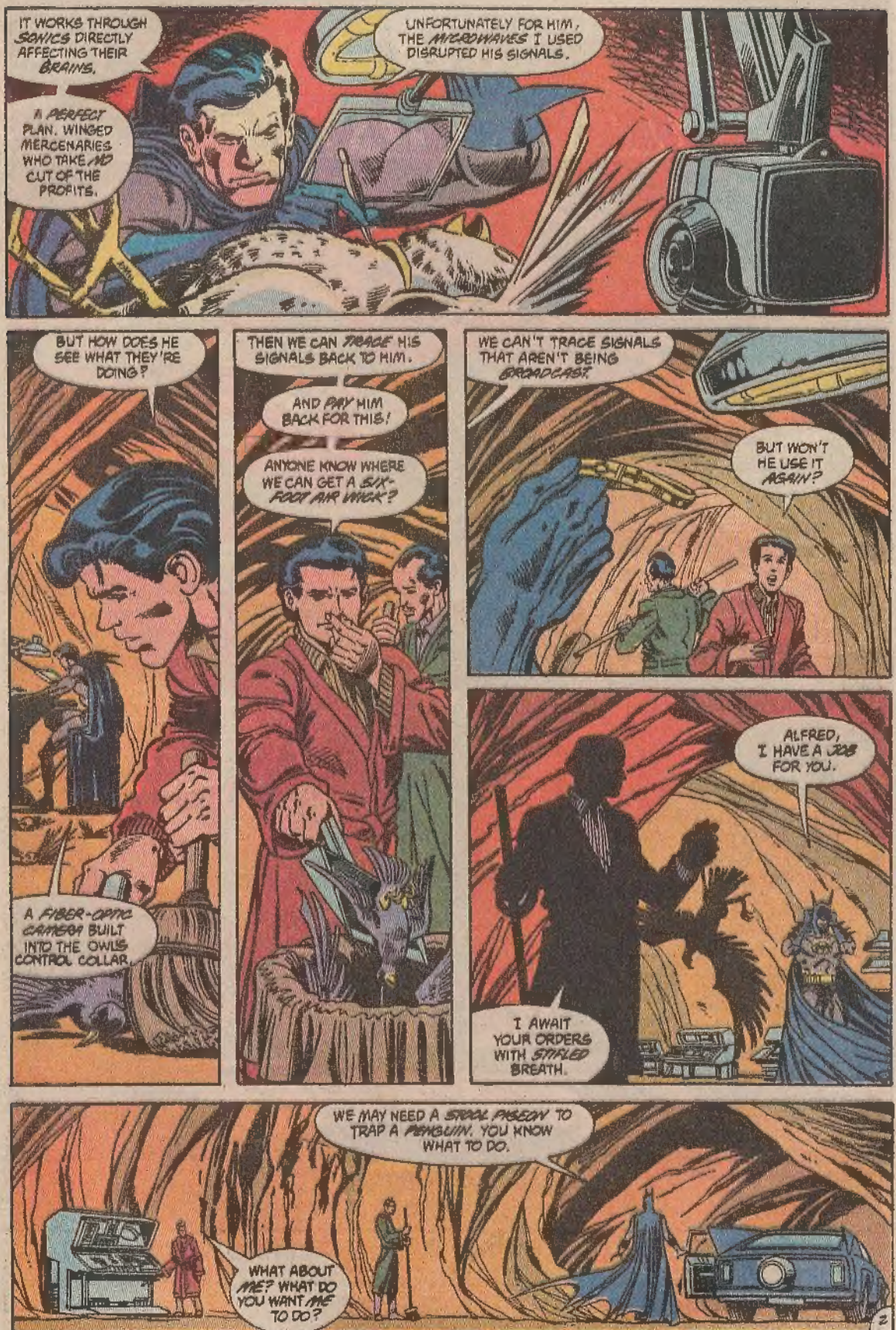
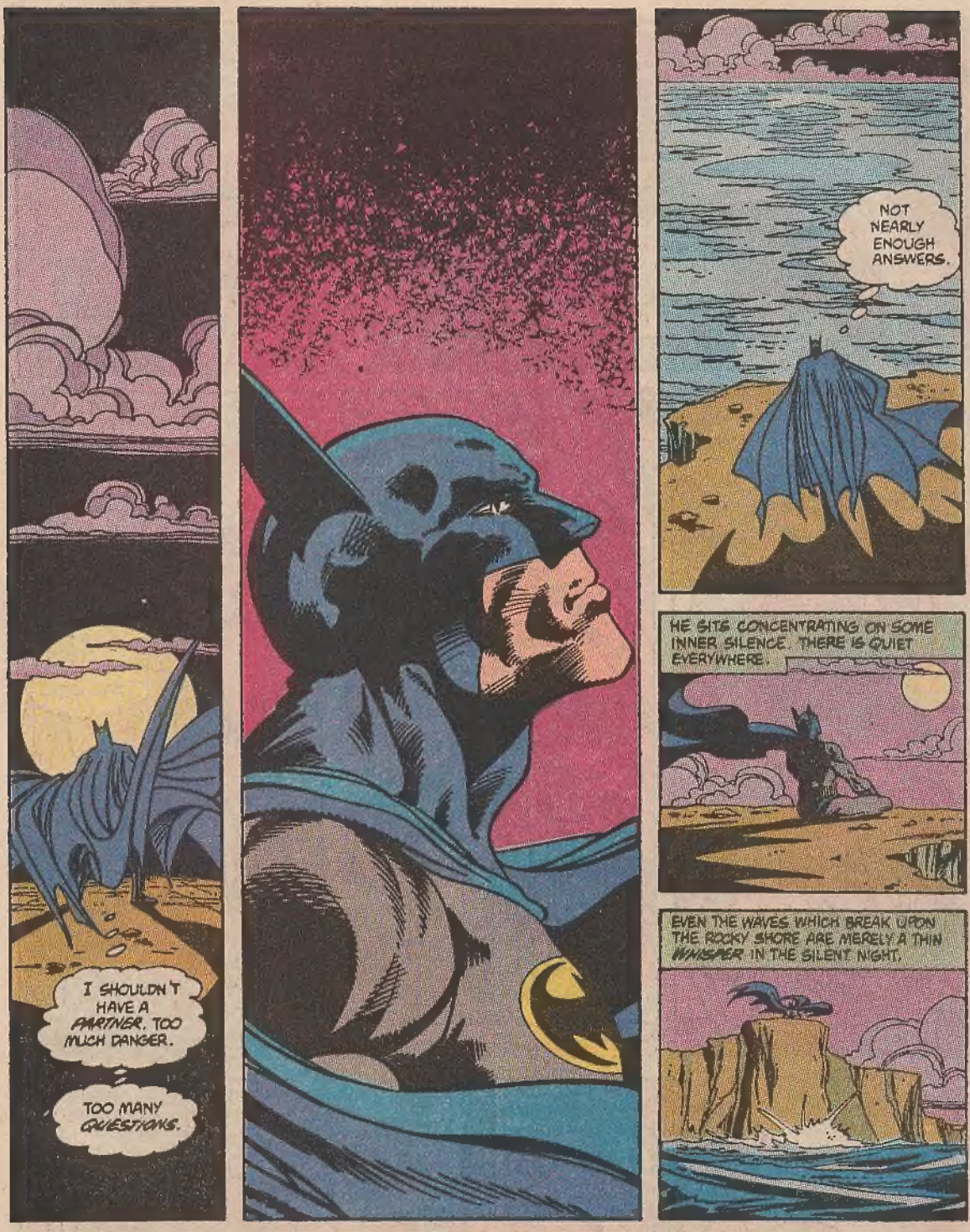
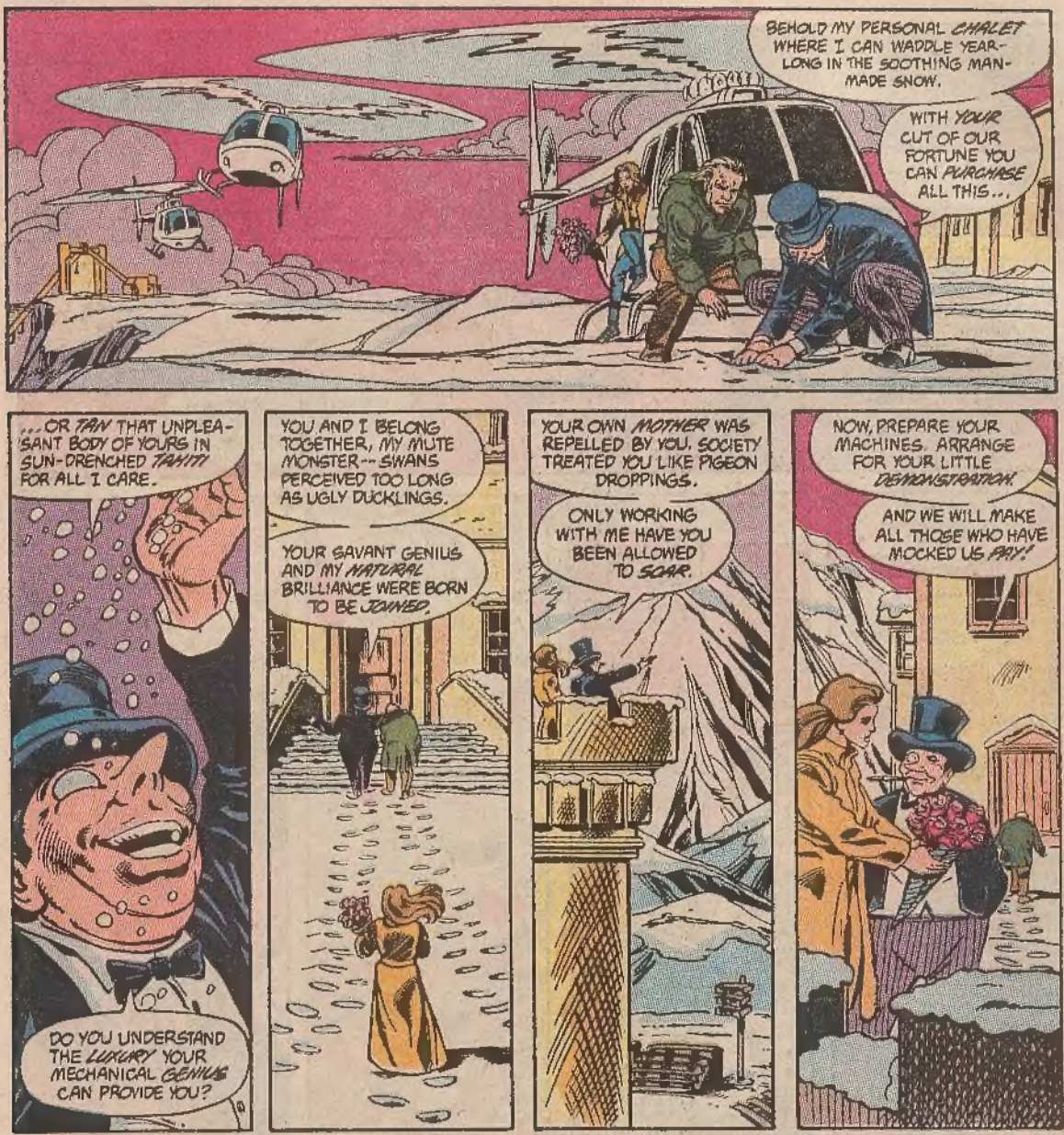

IT WORKS THROUGH SONICS DIRECTLY AFFECTING THEIR BRAINS.
A PERFECT PLAN. WINGED MERCENARIES WHO TAKE NO CUT OF THE PROFITS.
UNFORTUNATELY FOR HIM, THE MICROWAVES I USED DISRUPTED HIS SIGNALS.
BUT HOW DOES HE SEE WHAT THEY'RE DOING?
A FIBER-OPTIC CAMERA BUILT INTO THE OWL'S CONTROL COLLAR.
THEN WE CAN TRACE HIS SIGNALS BACK TO HIM.
AND PAY HIM BACK FOR THIS!
ANYONE KNOW WHERE WE CAN GET A SIX-FOOT AIR WICK?
WE CAN'T TRACE SIGNALS THAT AREN'T BEING BROADCAST.
BUT WON'T HE USE IT AGAIN?
ALFRED, I HAVE A JOB FOR YOU.
I AWAIT YOUR ORDERS WITH STIFLED BREATH.
WE MAY NEED A STOOL PIGEON TO TRAP A PENGUIN. YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO.
WHAT ABOUT ME? WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?

TO DATE PENGUIN'S CRIMES SEEM MORE DESIGNED TO ATTRACT ATTENTION THAN TO GAIN PROFIT.
HE MAY BE PLANNING ON SELLING HIS TECHNOLOGY RATHER THAN USING IT HIMSELF.
CROSSCHECK ALL AIRLINES WITH OUR FILES. SEE IF THERE'S ANY INCREASE IN CRIMINAL TRAFFIC TOWARD GOTHAM.
LET ME KNOW AS SOON AS YOU LEARN ANYTHING.
WH-WHAT DO YOU THINK HE'S GOING TO DO?
WHATEVER IT IS, SON, YOU'LL FIND OUT...
...BUT ONLY IF AND WHEN HE WANTS YOU TO.
TIM WANTS ANSWERS WHEN I CAN'T GIVE HIM ANY.
SOMETIMES THERE ARE ONLY BLIND ALLEYS AHEAD OF YOU.
YOU JUST HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL MISTAKES ARE MADE...
...CLUES ARE PROVIDED...
...OR SOMETHING, ANYTHING, FALLS INTO YOUR LAP.
BUT HOW CAN I TEACH HIM ABOUT PATIENCE...
...WHEN I'M ALL WOUND UP READY TO SPRING?


I SHOULDN'T HAVE A *PARTNER*. TOO MUCH DANGER.
TOO MANY *QUESTIONS*.
NOT NEARLY ENOUGH ANSWERS.
HE SITS CONCENTRATING ON SOME INNER SILENCE. THERE IS QUIET EVERYWHERE.
EVEN THE WAVES WHICH BREAK UPON THE ROCKY SHORE ARE MERELY A THIN *WHISPER* IN THE SILENT NIGHT.
IN SOME DISTANT SOLAR SYSTEM A STAR GOES *NOVA*.
TEN BILLION SENTIENT LIVES BOIL INSTANTLY AND ARE REDUCED TO VAPOR.

AT ONE TIME THERE WAS NO EARTH. AT SOME FUTURE TIME THE PLANET WILL AGAIN BE GONE.
BUT UNTIL THEN, MEN WILL DO WHAT THEY MUST.
TIM'S ADSA: THE PENGUIN WILL BROADCAST AGAIN.
WAYNETECH'S BROADCAST SATELLITE CAN PROVIDE TRIANGULATION.
REMEMBER TO THANK HIM LATER.
THE BOY NEEDS REASSURANCE.
OCCASIONALLY, SO DOES THE MAN.
I KNOW YOU ARE MUTE, HAROLD, BUT THERE'S BARELY BEEN A CHIRP OUT OF YOU THESE PAST DAYS.
ARE YOUR FEATHERS IN A RUFF OR WERE YOU JUST RESTING IN YOUR NEST?
TOMORROW'S THE BIG DAY, YOU KNOW. WE WILL DEMONSTRATE YOUR LITTLE TOY TO, UMMM, VARIOUS INTERESTED PARTIES.
YOU SHOULD BE PROUD AS A PEACOCK, PREENED AND READY TO SHOW OFF YOUR BRILLIANT PLUMAGE.
WE'VE BROUGHT YOUR MACHINES HERE ALONG WITH MY BIRDS. AND OUR GUESTS WILL ARRIVE BEFORE DUSK.
BY TOMORROW NIGHT WE WILL RETURN TO MY AERIE WITH MILLIONS IN OUR POCKETS.
TAX FREE, OF COURSE.


BEHOLD MY PERSONAL CHALET WHERE I CAN WADDLE YEAR-LONG IN THE SOOTHING MAN-MADE SNOW.
WITH YOUR CUT OF OUR FORTUNE YOU CAN PURCHASE ALL THIS...
...OR TAN THAT UNPLEASANT BODY OF YOURS IN SUN-DRENCHED TAHITI FOR ALL I CARE.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE LUXURY YOUR MECHANICAL GENIUS CAN PROVIDE YOU?
YOU AND I BELONG TOGETHER, MY MUTE MONSTER--SWANS PERCEIVED TOO LONG AS UGLY DUCKLINGS.
YOUR SAVANT GENIUS AND MY NATURAL BRILLIANCE WERE BORN TO BE JOINED.
YOUR OWN MOTHER WAS REPELLED BY YOU. SOCIETY TREATED YOU LIKE PIGEON DROPPINGS.
ONLY WORKING WITH ME HAVE YOU BEEN ALLOWED TO SOAR.
NOW, PREPARE YOUR MACHINES. ARRANGE FOR YOUR LITTLE DEMONSTRATION!
AND WE WILL MAKE ALL THOSE WHO HAVE MOCKED US PAY!
HE BELIEVES YOU'RE HIS FRIEND.
AND I AM, DEAR, BEAUTIFUL LARK. AT LEAST UNTIL THE DEMONSTRATION AND AUCTION ARE OVER.
THEN WE SHALL PLUCK HIS GROTESQUE FEATHERS--
--AND BE DONE WITH HIM ONCE AND FOR ALL.

PHONE
'S DEAD, MAN--WORD IN D'STREET'S ZIP.

CAFETERIA
UH UH--NOTHIN'S COMIN' DOWN NOPLACE.
SEAN

KEEPING MY EYES OPEN, PAL-- BUT NOTHING SO FAR.

YEAH, SOMETHING ABOUT A BOAT COMING IN FROM COLOMBIA SOMETIME TONIGHT...

PENGUIN? HEY, NOTHIN' YET, BUT I'M GETTIN' SOME NEWS MEBBE TONIGHT, ELEVEN.

YEAH, COUPLE OF SONS'O PADDY WERE WHISPERIN' 'BOUT AN AIRPORT PALAVER TONIGHT.

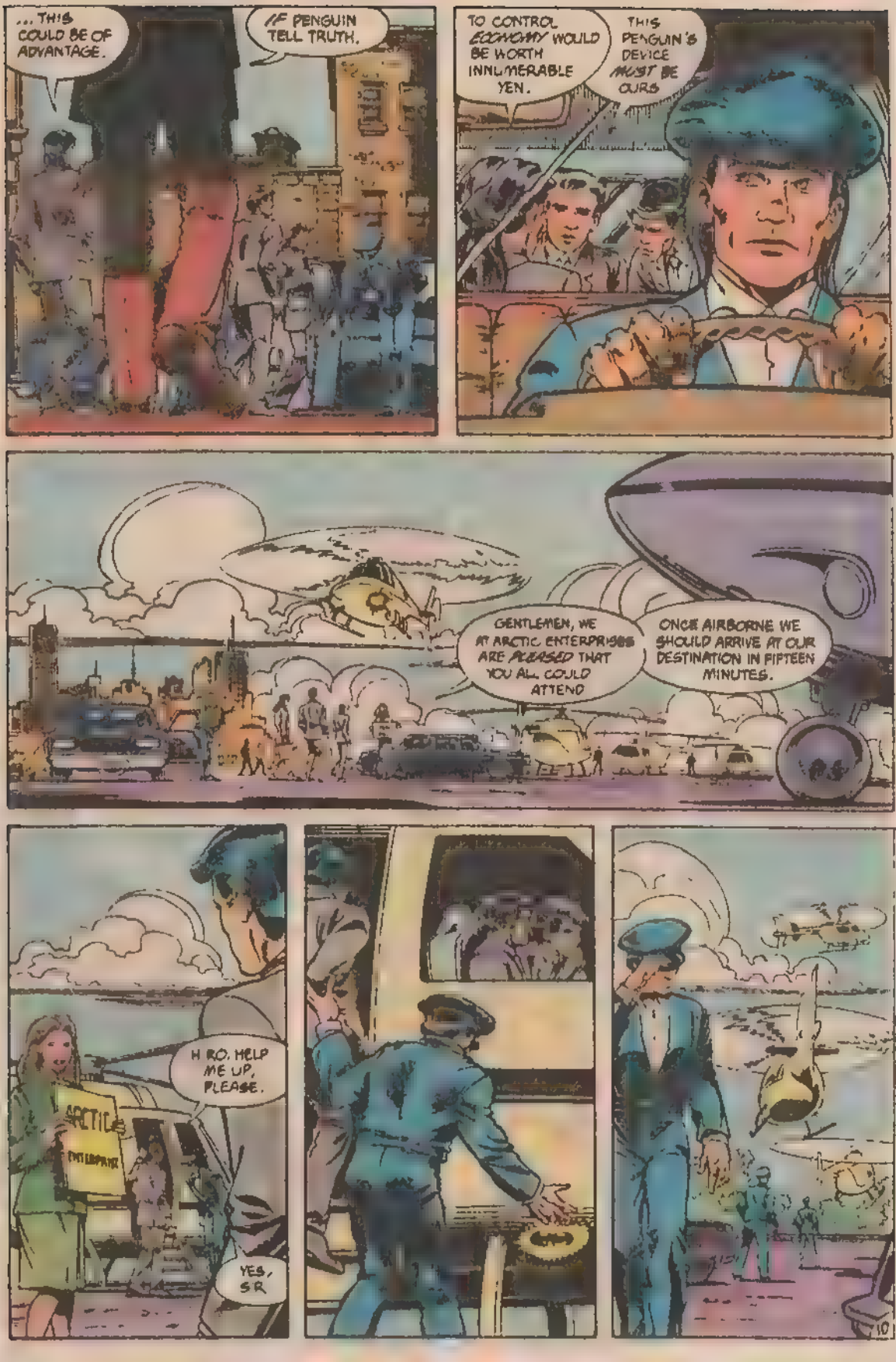
SOME NICARAGUAN, UHHH, BUSINESSMEN FRIENDS ARE IN TOWN... I BELIEVE IT CONCERNS YOUR BIRD.

FAR TOO DANGEROUS, EVEN FOR YOU. SUGGEST NO INTERFERENCE.

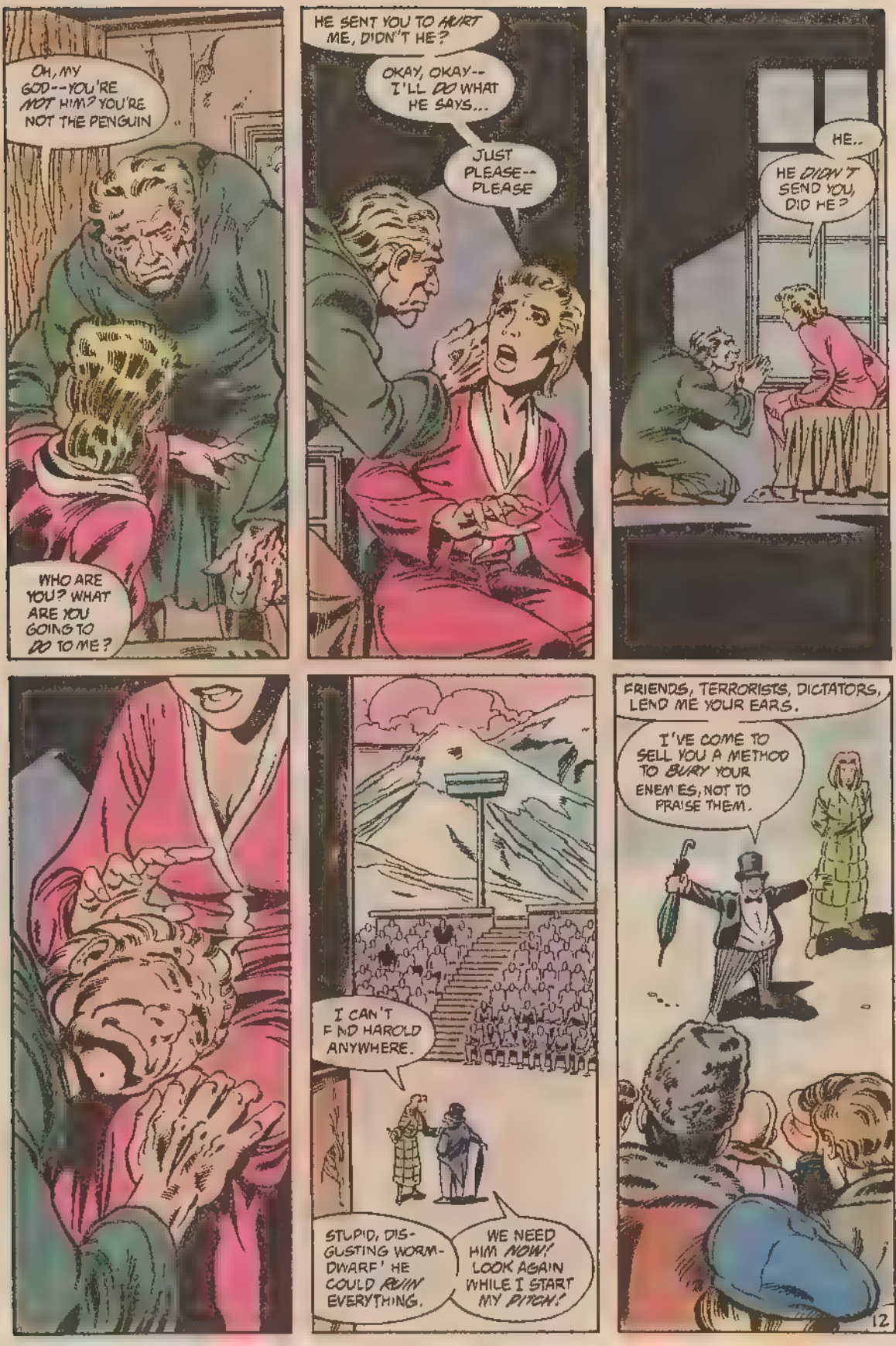
...THAT IS ALL THE INFORMATION WE HAVE, SIR.
SHALL I PREPARE YOUR BED FOR AN EARLY HOMECOMING, OR BANDAGES IF YOU INTEND TO STAY OUT LATE?

AHH, THERE YOU ARE, MY DEAR HERON.
I TRUST YOU'VE ENJOYED YOUR STAY THUS FAR.
IF ONLY YOU WOULD AGREE TO BE MINE I WOULD NOT HAVE TO HOLD YOU PRISONER.
WE ARE TWO BIRDS OF A FEATHER.
I ADORE YOUR TELEVISION SHOW. THE WAY YOU KILLED YOUR FIRST THREE HUSBANDS WAS...
...INSPIRATIONAL.
PENGUIN, PLEASE -- I TOLD YOU, I'M NOT HERON.
I'M NOT A MURDERER. I'M AN ACTRESS...
DO YOU TAKE ME FOR A DO-DO? OF COURSE I KNOW YOU'RE AN ACTRESS.
BUT, MY LITTLE BIRD OF PARADISE, YOU'RE NOT THAT GOOD.
YOU MUST DRAW ON THE TRUE FIRES THAT BURN WITHIN.
LIKE PYGMALION I WILL TAKE YOUR RAW MATERIAL AND RESHAPE YOU.
MY LOVELY HERON WILL METAMORPHOSE INTO MY WONDROUS GALATEA.
8

WE DON'T KNOW WHO WE'RE COOKING FOR, SO WHY ARE WE HERE?
OUR TELEPHONE INFORMANTS TOLD US THERE IS TO BE A MEETING--
BUT THERE ARE A DOZEN AIRLINES. THEY COULD BE MEETING ANYWHERE.
BUT THIS IS THE ONLY ONE ARRIVING FROM IRELAND. REMEMBER THE MESSAGE FROM MICHAEL O'S BAR.
EAGL
WAITING FOR ARCTIC LIMOUSINES, MR. LEARY?
ARCTIC LIMOUSINES
IT'D BETTER BE WORTH THE TRAVELLIN', GIRL.
I COULD BE DEAD AS A FISH MARKET MACKEREL LEAVIN' ME HOME AT THIS TIME.
LITTLE BAT TO BIG BAT.
TARGET IN CROSS-HAIRS.
SO IS MINE.
KILL ALL SQUAWK.
ROGER. OUT.
9


... THIS COULD BE OF ADVANTAGE.
IF PENGUIN TELL TRUTH.
TO CONTROL ECONOMY WOULD BE WORTH INNUMERABLE YEN.
THIS PENGUIN'S DEVICE MUST BE OURS
GENTLEMEN, WE AT ARCTIC ENTERPRISES ARE PLEASED THAT YOU ALL COULD ATTEND
ONCE AIRBORNE WE SHOULD ARRIVE AT OUR DESTINATION IN FIFTEEN MINUTES.
H RO. HELP ME UP, PLEASE.
YES, SIR
10

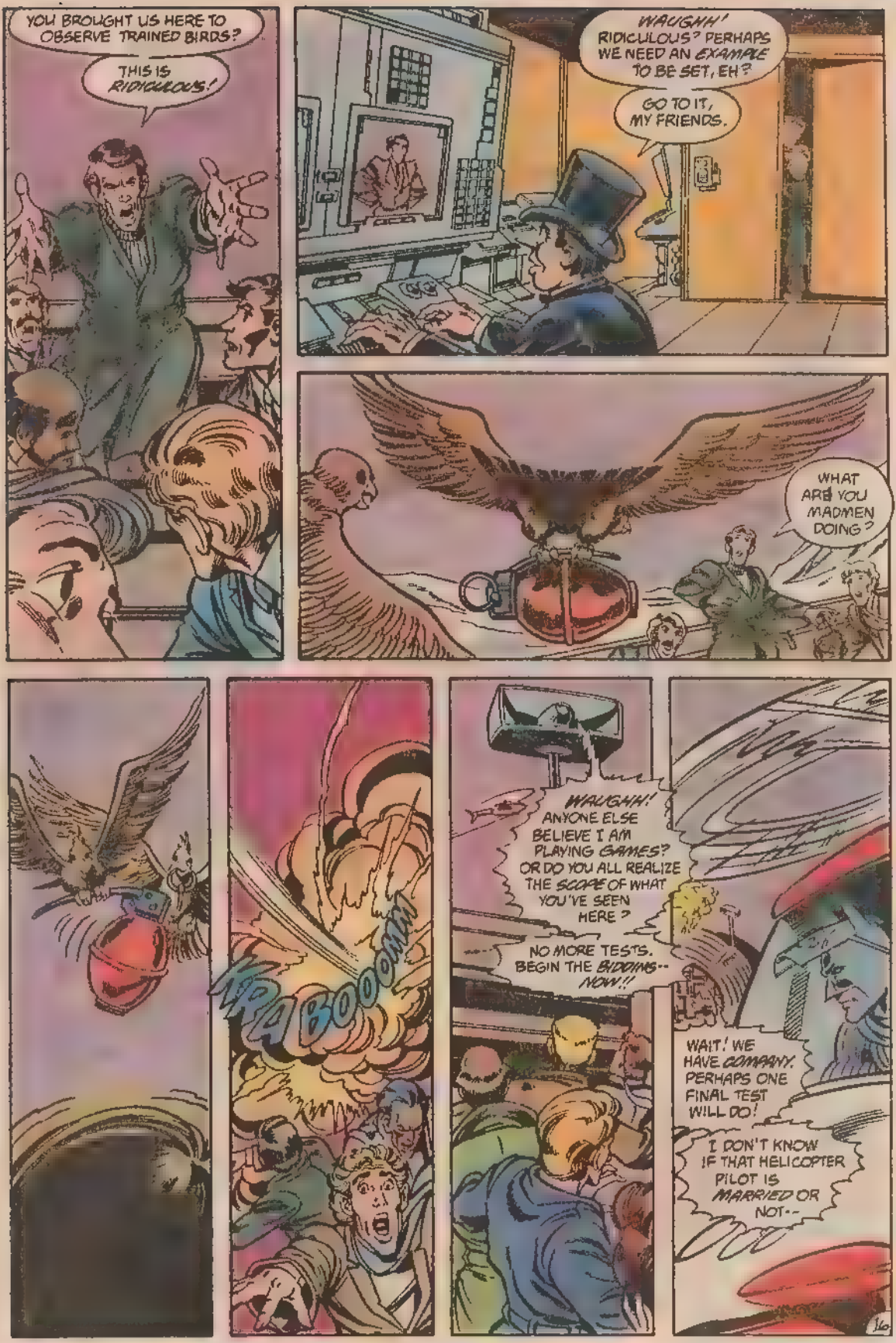
MAY I ASK WHAT BRINGS YOU?
COMPUTER CHECK SHOWED A SUSPECTED JAPANESE TERRORIST ARRIVED HERE.
I PUT A TRACER IN PLACE.
IT ONLY HAS A FIVE MILE RANGE, BUT BETWEEN IT AND WAYNETECH SATELLITE TRIANGULATION...
...ONCE PENGUIN REACTIVATES HIS DEVICE, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO TRACE IT.
HI.
YOUR IDEA, TIM. IT'S A GOOD ONE.
THANKS BUT NOW WHAT?
WE HEAD TO THE WAYNETECH'S HANGAR AT GOTHAM AIR TERMINAL.
AND ONCE WE SET UP THE TRIANGULATION EQUIPMENT--WE WAIT!
LEAVE ME ALONE FOR PITY'S SAKE--STOP.
I'M NOT WHO YOU THINK I AM.
I'M NOT HERON...I'M NOT THAT KILLER.
J-JUST LEAVE ME ALONE... PLEASE
11


OH, MY GOD--YOU'RE NOT HIM? YOU'RE NOT THE PENGUIN
WHO ARE YOU? WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO TO ME?
HE SENT YOU TO HURT ME, DIDN'T HE?
OKAY, OKAY-- I'LL DO WHAT HE SAYS...
JUST PLEASE-- PLEASE
HE..
HE DIDN'T SEND YOU, DID HE?
I CAN'T FIND HAROLD ANYWHERE.
STUPID, DISGUSTING WORM-DWARF! HE COULD RUIN EVERYTHING.
WE NEED HIM NOW! LOOK AGAIN WHILE I START MY PITCH!
FRIENDS, TERRORISTS, DICTATORS, LEND ME YOUR EARS.
I'VE COME TO SELL YOU A METHOD TO BURY YOUR ENEMIES, NOT TO PRAISE THEM.
12

YOU'VE ALL HEARD ABOUT MY VARIOUS CAPERS THESE PAST DAYS. ROBBERIES, TERRORISM-- RAMPANT, MINDLESS DESTRUCTION.
THEY COULD ALL BE YOURS. BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE!
NO MORE NEED FOR COSTLY MISSILES AND ROCKETS, NO DANGER OF RADIOACTIVITY OR POLLUTION.
AND ONCE YOU'VE BOUGHT THE TECHNOL- OGY, THERE'S NO COSTLY UP- KEEP IT'S ALL BIRD- FEED!
AND DON'T FORGET YOU WILL BE ABLE TO UTTERLY DESTROY YOUR NEIGHBORS AND ANNEX THEIR LAND.
NOW, WHAT WOULD YOU EXPECT TO PAY FOR ALL THIS IF YOU COULD BUY IT IN THE STORES?
TEN BILLION? TWENTY BILLION? THIRTY BILLION OR MORE?
WELL, THE ANSWER'S UP TO YOU, MY FRIENDS.
SHALL WE BEGIN THE BIDDING?
WE HAVE READ THE ACCOUNTS, PENGUIN. BUT WE HAVE SEEN NOTHING.
BEFORE WE BID, WE WANT A DEMON- STRATION. NOW!
A DEMONSTRATION? YOU WANT A DEMONSTRATION?
WISE OWL, SIR.. WISE. THEN A DEMONSTRATION YOU SHALL HAVE.
13

MY LOVELY ASSISTANT, LARK, WILL BE HERE WITH YOU WHILE, AHEM, I OPERATE THE MACHINES!
WHERE THE HELL IS HE?
I DON'T KNOW. I CAN'T FIND HIM ANY-WHERE
BLAST HIM... MY CONTROL OVER THIS MACHINE IS RUDIMENTARY AT BEST.
UGLY MISSHAPEN BEAST-- THAT GARGOYLE WILL PAY FOR THIS.
THERE! IT HAS BEGUN!
WAYNETECH
THIS IS IT! THE TRANSMISSION THAT CONTROL THE BIRDS HAS STARTED
LINK INTO THE WAYNETECH SATELLITES AND TRANSULATE DIRECTION.
ONCE I'M WITHIN FIVE MILES, MY TRACER WILL TAKE ME THE REST OF THE WAY
GOOD LUCK, BRUCE
TIM, WE MAKE OUR OWN LUCK.
NOW GUIDE ME STRAIGHT!
SPECIALLY ENFORCED SUIT AND MICROWAVE TRANSMITTER.
THIS TIME, PENGUIN-- I'M READY FOR YOU.
14

WAR, WHETHER A WAR OF CRIME, OR A WAR OF NATIONS, RISKS THE LIVES OF SOLDIERS.
ARCTIC ENTERPRISES HAS FOUND A WAY TO ELIMINATE THAT RISK WHILE INCREASING YOUR RATE OF SUCCESS
OBSERVE!
SKEEEE
SKRAA
SKQUAWWW
5


YOU BROUGHT US HERE TO OBSERVE TRAINED BIRDS?
THIS IS RIDICULOUS!
WAUGHH! RIDICULOUS? PERHAPS WE NEED AN EXAMPLE TO BE SET, EH?
GO TO IT, MY FRIENDS.
WHAT ARE YOU MADMEN DOING?
KRABOOOM!
WAUGHH! ANYONE ELSE BELIEVE I AM PLAYING GAMES? OR DO YOU ALL REALIZE THE SCOPE OF WHAT YOU'VE SEEN HERE?
NO MORE TESTS. BEGIN THE BIDDING-- NOW!!
WAIT! WE HAVE COMPANY. PERHAPS ONE FINAL TEST WILL DO!
I DON'T KNOW IF THAT HELICOPTER PILOT IS MARRIED OR NOT--

BUT HE'S GOING TO LEARN WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HENPECKED!
WAUGH! WAUGHH! WAUGHH!
SQUAWW
SKRAAA
SKRAA
KAWW
CAWW
SKRAAA
SKRAAA!
BAWHOOOMMM
WAUGH! DELIGHTFUL, DELIRIOUS, D'WONDERFUL! HOW MUCH BAT CAN A WOODPECKER PECK?
I WILL SEE THE DEATH OF MY ARCH-ENEMY AND SHOW THESE BUYERS HOW EFFECTIVE THIS MACHINERY CAN BE.
BECAUSE OF THIS FORTUITOUS BATTLE, ITS PRICE SHOULD INCREASE A HUNDREDFOLD!

WHOOOMP
UNIFORMS MOLDING BUT I CAN STILL FEEL THEIR BEAKS THROUGH THE EXTRA PADDING.
BUT WE ALREADY KNOW WHAT TURNS THEM OFF DON'T WE?
SKRAAKKK
KKKK
KK

WAUGHH! NICE TRY, OLD HOF. BUT MY TRANSMITTER IS BIGGER THAN YOURS.
AND IT COMES EQUIPPED WITH MANY FREQUENCIES JUST FOR EMERGENCIES LIKE THIS
ANYTHING YOU CAN DO, I CAN DO DEADLIER! WAUGH!!
SO THERE YOU ARE, YOU DEMENTED LOUT!
YOU TRIED TO FLY FREE JUST WHEN I MOST NEEDED YOU!
WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?
WHO TOOK YOU INTO HIS NEST? WHO FED YOU? WHO PREENED YOU?
WHO DESPISED YOU EVERY SECOND THAT HE PRETENDED TO BE YOUR FRIEND?
HAROLD?!?
YOU TOO, DEAR HERON?
VULTURES TO THE RIGHT OF ME, CARRION TO THE LEFT?!?
AM I SURROUNDED BY TRAITORS?

I COULD HAVE LOVED YOU, HERON.
I TOLD YOU, I'M NOT HERON. I'M AN ACTRESS.
IN WHICH CASE THE CURTAIN IS COMING DOWN ON YOUR LAST PERFORMANCE.
BUT I WILL DEAL WITH YOU AFTER I'M THROUGH WITH BATMAN
HIS DEATH, AND THE AUCTION, ARE STILL MY HIGHEST PRIORITIES.
IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME--
SKRAAA
WHAT KEEPS YOU UP, BATMAN?
SKWAW
SKRAAA
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? WAUGHH! BIRDS, STOP HIM! KILL HIM!!
SKRAAA

SKQUAWWW
REWIRING MY SPEAKER? WHAT DO YOU EXPECT TO ACCOMPLISH BY THAT, YOU STUPID--
CAWW
KAWWWW
SKRAAA
SKRAA
SKREEEEEEEEE
SKREEEEEEEEEEE
WAUGHHHH! MY EARS! WH-WHAT'S THE INFERNAL SCREECH?
HE'S CUT MY TRANSMISSION AND INCREASED HIS.
IT'S TIME TO FLEE THE COOP, AND RETURN TO PENGUIN'S ROOST. COME!
PLEASE--FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, DON'T DO THIS TO ME.
SORRY, MY DEAR, BUT NO CAN DO. I'VE--
PENGUIN!

B-BATMAN?
WAUGHH! YOU AND THAT DEMENTED DWARF-- YOU'RE ALL DOUBLE-CROSSING TRAITORS!
DWARF?
HAROLD--HE INVENTED PENGUIN'S MACHINE.
WHERE IS HE?
I--I DON'T KNOW, BATMAN.
AFTER HE TRIED TO HELP YOU... AFTER THE PENGUIN STOPPED HIM--
--HE TOOK OFF.
HE DOESN'T TALK... HE COULDN'T TELL ME WHERE HE WAS GOING.
BUT HE WAS FOOLED BY THE PENGUIN. HE DIDN'T WANT TO HURT ANYONE.
HE...HE RAN OFF... SO HE COULD BE ALONE.
MAYBE THAT'S JUST WHERE WE SHOULD LEAVE HIM.
ALONE...
END

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Dear Denny,

With the eyes of the world focused on events in Eastern Europe, it was encouraging to read a comic (BATMAN #445) which showed a spirit of cooperation between East and West.

I suspect that Batman will need even more help from the Soviets if he is to defeat the NKVDemon. As we have already seen, Batman is no match for him in a pure battle of strength, and in Moscow the Demon has the advantage of home turf.

I greatly enjoyed issue #445, especially the grim Batman on Brian Bolland's cover, and this promises to be an exciting, thought-provoking, and topical story. My only complaint is the names: KGBeast and NKVDemon. They sound like they're out of the camp TV show.

Yours sincerely,
Martin Simcox
84 Barnett Lane, Wordsley,
Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY8 5PX
ENGLAND

Careful what you say, Martin. The ClAgents may be listening...

*****

Dear Denny,

Re: BATMAN #445.

The Dark Knight returns to the USSR chasing down the pupil of the KGBeast. It wasn't too long ago that Batman battled the Beast, and in light of recent events behind the once-Iron Curtain, this tale is very timely. I think, though, that I shall wait until it is over before I cover this in detail.

Meantime, it appears Tim will have his first solo adventure before officially becoming Robin (assuming that really hasn't been done, discounting issue #442). He's just as curious as Bruce is about his folks, but I have a sick suspicion they're not exactly the best parents a kid could have. Meantime, Tim may be feeling the pangs of puppy love before too long, if that scene at the school is any indication.

See you in thirty.

Jacob Gilbert
118 Fourth St., Apt. 1
Troy, NY 12180

Nope, see you in fourteen—BATMAN is currently twice monthly!

*****

Denny and Co.,

You've done an excellent job with the Batman so far and I believe you're on the right track. Taking Batman out of his element and putting him in the Soviet Union may be following a trend in modern entertainment but it is definitely a logical step and shows how truly mainstream comics are.

It does seem there's a bit of a controversy brewing with the arrival of the new Robin, Tim Drake. I've always believed that the Batman will be one of the few heroes to leave a legacy, whether it is with the birth of heroes like Nightwing or even with someone taking up the cowl of Batman after Bruce's retirement or (dare I say it) demise. I realize that could be another 50 years away, but at least one could keep it in mind. With Tim Drake, you've got that potential. He's living out the dream of nearly every kid, to be the hero he's always worshiped. He doesn't have some kind of revenge-inspired need to destroy the criminal element, he just wants to be the best at living up to a legend and being a part of that legend. Maybe most kids aren't that pure-hearted anymore, but some are and that's why we should give Tim a chance.

Thanks,
T.J. Pfingston
Rt. 3 Willow Loop
Sturgis, KY 42459

*****

Dear Denny and Daniel:

You know, writing letters of high praise to BATMAN is getting to be something of a habit. I must add, it's a habit I am very happy to have! I love Batman. I've loved Batman for many years. It's great that not only are his books selling better now than they have in years (maybe better—I don't know), but they're also better on a regular basis than they've been in quite a while.

I've already written to "Bat-Signals" about the Marv Wolfman renaissance, so maybe I don't need to say again that Marv's plotting is stronger, his dialogue more poignant, his characterizations better than they were for a few years that seemed to be a dry spell after the heyday of the TITANS in '83 and '84. With the Crimesmith story and now "Ten Nights of the Beast II" (thank you for not calling this storyline by an asinine name like that and trying to hype it as a "miniseries within a series." BATMAN is in no need of cheesy marketing ploys), classic Wolfman writing is back, possibly better than before. While I love his fight scenes and his subtle interweavings of subplot threads, what I love most about Wolfman's BATMAN scripts is the way he portrays the masked manhunter as scaring the hell out of the criminals he preys on.

Requests: new recurring Batman villains, perhaps bringing back some of the Grant/Wagner/Breyfogle baddies ... less Two-Face ... way fewer flashback tales ... more mysteries, perhaps a whodunit ... and see what David V. Reed is up to. He crafted some interesting Bat-tales in the mid-70's, and I'd love to see him do a fill-in story or two.

Frank Balkin
(address withheld by request)

*****

Dear Bat-Writers:

Well, the "Ten Nights of the Beast" back issues will probably go up another $5.00 or so as new readers go looking for the background of the NKVDemon. Why wasn't there a similar logo on the cover ("Ten Nights of the Demon"?) I am grateful at least that you have retained more than Jason Todd's death from Jim Starlin's tenure on BATMAN. Indeed, with all due respect to Marv Wolfman, Starlin was the best regular writer on BATMAN in the last few years (Frank Miller doesn't count), and I have these strange fears that you tend to brush aside some of the more intriguing ideas. (For example, Jim Gordon complains that he still hasn't replaced the men that the KGBeast killed—but what about all those people killed afterward during BATMAN: THE CULT? Surely such a fiasco as THE CULT scenario would be lodged in the Gotham psyche for a LONG time!). And if the KGBeast is still alive, as Nightwing hinted in BATMAN #439, then where is HE during all this?

Oh, and I couldn't help but notice the presence of TWO (count 'em) females in this story—Vicki Vale (in her first appearance since BATMAN #412, I believe) and ... Rebecca Curley? Is Robin getting a love interest, too? My, my, this could be interesting...

The artwork was our usual wonderful Jim Aparo—honestly, who else could have drawn the sequel to the KGBeast story? (Good as Brian Bolland is, perhaps Mike Zeck could have done the cover, for the sake of consistency.) I have one minor criticism, though: Tim Drake's hand on page 14, last panel: How old did you say this kid was—13? I'm 19 myself and even MY hand doesn't look so herculean!

I eagerly anticipate the continuation of the little dramas within. It's great to see BATMAN getting out of its episodic

rut and back into some past-acknowledging continuity.

See you in twenty-eight,.

Peter T. Chattaway
6666 Arlington St.
Vancouver, BC
CANADA V5S 3N9

Nope, see you in fourteen—BATMAN is currently twice monthly!

And there wasn't a similar logo on the cover of this storyline, because BATMAN doesn't need any cheesy marketing ploys (or at least THIS particular cheesy marketing ploy).

*****

Hey, Denny—

Re: BATMAN #445.

I really like the new calculating, professional air that Marv has instilled in the Batman. He seems to be much more in control of his actions and priorities now than he has in a very long while. And his motivation is once again justice rather than revenge.

I also like the arrogant, cocksure attitude that just naturally seems to emanate from the Bruce Wayne persona nowadays. I think it's great. And, more important, it's expected behavior from a man of Wayne's worldwide prominence. It's a great smoke screen.

But Vicki Vale? Why??! Is it possibly due to the character's exposure to the public in the film or is it just an amazing coincidence in timing? And if it is the latter, I suppose her remark about the rooms in Wayne's house was another one of life's little ironies, eh?

Seeya at Munden's.

Uncle Elvis
17650 Dawson Rd.
Dawson Springs, KY 42408

You know, doctors say that a little irony every day is very healthful for you.

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Dear Denny and KC,

If the sensational Brian Bolland cover for BATMAN #445 doesn't sell a few thousand extra copies, I'll eat my Batman baseball cap! I strongly recommend that you commission more such covers from Brian, not solely for the obvious commercial reasons, but also because this fan enjoys them so much.

That the KGBeast should have had an "apprentice" comes as no surprise, especially since the KGBeast story went down so well. While the cynics might cry "exploitation," all I can say is "Well done, Marv Wolfman" in scripting such a strong story as "When The Earth Dies" out of the basic premise. While his code name is much more of a mouthful than his mentor's, the NKVDemon looks like every bit as much of a handful for the Dark Knight as his predecessor. The battle between the two was written very well, and I could truly BELIEVE that Batman was facing someone he might not be a match for (a feeling I also had in the KGBeast story). Batman's answer to the Demon's accusation of "unfair play" as the KGB closed in at the end appropriately echoed the solution of the original serial, but the fact that the Demon is now forewarned might mean that Batman will be forced to find a different means of ending this threat. I look forward to finding out.

Marv can always be relied on to provide gripping subplots in his stories, and this month we see developments regarding Tim Drake and (Yay!) Vicki Vale. The return of Vicki is another predictable move, and the almost-reference to the continuity of the movie DID jar just a little, because this reader remembers the many great issues written by Doug Moench a few years ago which are now out of the Batman continuity. But I can accept that if it means Marv can revive the romantic element missing for a while from this book. We shall see. The question of what happened to Tim's parents is an intriguing one, and prompts endless speculation. I can't help but think that there might be something illicit in the business that keeps them away from their son for so long. Hmm?

Last for this month, if I have to tell you that I like Jim and Mike's art, you haven't been paying attention while I've been writing all these months!

Best,
Dale Coe
56 Whitecross Rd.
Warrington, Cheshire WA5 1LR
ENGLAND

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NEXT ISSUE: Someone who APPEARS to be the Joker is terrorizing Gotham City . . while the real Joker lies low. But how long can the Clown Prince of Crime stand to have someone get his press? And what happens when Batman finally encounters the man who killed Jason Todd? This 3-part story begins in BATMAN #450, continues in DETECTIVE #617 and concludes in BATMAN #451. And don't forget, the first part is on sale IN TWO WEEKS!

And don't forget the Batman appearances in DETECTIVE, LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT, SUICIDE SQUAD, and in the first issue of MS. TREE QUARTERLY. And if it's "classic Batman" you're looking for, the first volume of the BATMAN ARCHIVES is just around the corner!

—KC Carlson
Victim of a bad plot-twist

From the Den

For a week last December, instead of taking the subway to mid-Manhattan, I drove over the East River to the edge of Greenwich Village and went to work in Pepe Moreno's loft.

I was there to do a final, close edit of Digital Justice, the graphic novel about a future Batman that Pepe was in the process of completing. I suppose I was, and am, the world's leading authority on on-screen comic book editing, at least until the next person does it, because anyone who might have done it before surely didn't work with state-of-the-art equipment. Pepe is a self-confessed technophile and what he has in his loft is a computer-freak's dream.

At first, it was a bit bewildering to me. Instead of wielding a blue pencil, I worked with a keyboard and a mouse and instead of indicating changes for a letterer or production artist to make, I was actually *making* them on a disk which would yield the film from which the final book would be printed, thereby skipping over about six interim steps. It took getting used to. But whenever I got frustrated at my own technological ineptitude, I reminded myself that this was probably what all editors would be doing in a decade or so. I was getting a head start on the inevitable.

Having Pepe at my elbow helped in several ways. The obvious one is that he was intimate with all phases of the equipment. But more important, Pepe is a visionary and a perfectionist, and his dedication and plain old hard work inspire those involved in projects with him to give something close to maximum effort.

Leaving his building for the last time, I wondered if what we were doing was worth almost two years of Pepe's labor, and about 18 months of on-and-off attention from art director Rich Bruning, Doug Murray, who wrote the dialogue, and myself (not to mention contributions from Bob Rozakis, Mike Gold, Javier Romero, Bob Fingerman, and Vicente Sosa). A lot of work from a lot of people. Yesterday I was given one of the first 20 copies of Digital Justice to come off the press—hand-bound because the machine-binding of the pages was yet to be done. I hefted it, looked at it, thought: *This is really handsome.* Then I remembered what's satisfying about the kind of work we do and didn't regret a single second any of us had put into the book.